

In a Moment

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Summary:

Bill really crossed a line by hitting Richie.

In a Moment

The impact of fist on face (and then body on ground) is over in a moment- but their already shitty world has changed irreparably, darkened just that little fraction more, because Bill Denbrough hit Richie Tozier. He hit him so hard that his lip split and he crumpled to the asphalt.

Richie touched his lip, gawked at the blood that came away on his fingertips, and then turned a disbelieving stare on his friend- on his *best friend*- who had never before laid a hand on him, no matter how much he might have deserved it.

It's not like he's never been hit before. Hell, this isn't even the first time this week that it's happened. But this is *Bill, and it was no soft and excusable thing. He'd up and decked Richie in his trashmouth because he wanted him to shut up and comply with his plans, to continue putting their lives in danger to save a little boy who'd been dead for nine months already.*

Richie sprang to his feet, screaming just this, and was embarrassed when he sounded neither tough nor manly; but shrill and heartbroken as the child he was. When he advanced on Bill, wanting more than anything to beat some sense into his damn stubborn hero's skull, he felt Stan catch his arms; felt Mike grip him around the neck with his strong farmer's arms.

Immobilized, he can only scream his fury at Bill, ignoring Beverly's own protests straight from a TV special- "*we can't do this! IT wants to divide us!*" (what does she know, she wasn't in that hellpit, she didn't see Betty Ripsom's dangling body torn in two like a gruesome carnival prize. She hadn't had to see her own rotting corpse in a coffin underneath a missing persons poster of her own face).

In the cursed town of Derry, bullies carved their names on your stomach and beat your face with rocks as adults benignly watched it happen. In the town of Derry, monsters played mind games and then dragged kids into sewers and everyone kept their mouths shut when it happened. In the town of Derry, adults were free to hit you; to yell at you; to lie to you; to ignore you or pay too much unwanted

attention to you in dark rooms or behind the professional disguise of lab coats and doctor's diplomas.

In the town of Derry, kids knew their only real protection was other kids- the ones who were meant to love and protect you at any cost could only be your friends. And Bill, with one swing of his fist, had shattered any illusions Richie had ever held of safety and security.

He spat a goblet of blood and phlegm at Bill's feet and sneered to hide his tears, then wriggled away from Stan and Mike and snatched up his bike, vowing that if Bill wanted to get his damn fool self eaten by a monster like his long-gone kid brother, then it was his right to do so on his own.

He pedaled as hard as he could towards the arcade, where he could hide his face until the tears stopped flowing, and punch pixels on a screen with other pixels and pretend they were Bill's stupid earnest face. He told himself again and again that he'd never come to the Loser's rescue again, and he almost believed it.